



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ANNUAL REPORT YEAR I

October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015

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This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by SSG Advisors.

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I. BACKGROUND

Under this contract, SSG Advisors provides expert technical and logistical support services to the Education team in the USAID Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean's Office of Regional Sustainable Development (LAC/RSD) to strengthen the design, management, and evaluation of regional and bilateral education programs in LAC. These services enhance the Education team's ability to:

1. Support USAID/LAC Missions with planning, design, and implementation of new programs and activities;
2. Monitor and evaluate the performance of LAC regional and Mission education programs, such as through the collection of data for reporting progress and contributions to the USAID Education Strategy goals;
3. Support organizational learning and knowledge management, such as through technical training of USAID education officers in the field, including biennial regional education officer technical workshops; and
4. Collect, analyze, and communicate data about education and programming in LAC.

The contract is for two base years with three option years. This report describes major activities in the first year of the project, October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015. It concludes by noting future activities expected in the next year, October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016.

2. ACTIVITY ACHIEVEMENTS

The table below summarizes SSG's achievements in the first year of the project.

	Work Stream	Goal	Achievements Year I 10/1/14 – 9/30/15	Timeframe
1.	Project Management	To manage the tasks and compliance requirements of the contract.	SSG sent weekly written progress updates, held weekly calls with the LAC/RSD team, and submitted accruals and quarterly reports for quarters I through 4. This year witnessed the successful completion of twelve separate task orders in four different countries in the LAC region as well as the United States. Task orders included organizing workshops and trainings, conducting assessments and evaluations, and supporting the development and design of documents and programs that address one or more of the three main goals of the USAID education strategy: early childhood literacy rates, workforce development (WfD), and increased access to education in crisis or conflict Environments.	October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015
2.	Miami Regional Education Workshop	To coordinate a five-day technical workshop held by the LAC Regional Bureau for the ten field Missions with active education programming by managing preparations, organizing logistics, and ensuring successful completion and an optimal learning experience for all participants.	SSG conducted a five-day workshop, which successfully provided a platform to increase regional coordination and programming and sharing of best practices, building and strengthening regional team relationships, and reinforcing the abilities and knowledge of the participants to operationalize USAID's Education Strategy and develop and utilize mechanisms to measure the attainment of strategy goals. All LAC Missions were represented, with the exception of the mission in Barbados, and participants took part in daily workshops and panel discussions that were facilitated by education specialists from LAC/RSD, the LAC Reads Capacity Program, the respective Missions, and the World Bank, among others. Typically held on a biannual basis, this was the first such workshop held since 2010. The sessions included program updates from the Missions and discussions on USAID's education goals in the region, as well as goal counting to ensure Missions are aligned with the broad education strategies. A total of 37 participants attended the workshop.	June 1, 2014 – June 5, 2015

Work Stream		Goal	Achievements Year I 10/1/14 – 9/30/15	Timeframe
3.	Miami Workforce Development Training	To coordinate a four-day training event held by the LAC Regional Bureau for USAID/Washington and the ten field Missions with active education programming by managing preparations, organizing logistics, and ensuring successful completion and an optimal learning experience for all participants.	SSG conducted a four-day WfD training in collaboration with FHI 360. Among the highlights was strong participant appreciation of the link between workforce development and citizen security. Additionally, by the end of the training, participants were able to carry out exercises that allowed them to identify problem statements, determine outcomes, construct causal loop models, choose indicators, undertake assessments, understand youth, and recognize WfD best practices. A total of 19 participants attended the workshop.	June 8, 2015 – June 11, 2015
4.	Nicaragua Youth Employment Project Design Activity	To develop a project solicitation document for a new youth workforce development project that will provide employment opportunities for at-risk, out-of- school youth in Nicaragua, with specific emphasis to those living in the Autonomous Southern Caribbean Region (RACS).	SSG engaged a consultant to support the development of technical program documents in collaboration with the Mission in support of the new youth WfD project. This included a comprehensive desk review, in-country data collection and analysis (in Managua, Leon, Esteli, Matagalpa and RACS), and consultation/coordination with the USAID/Nicaragua Mission. The final deliverable was submitted to USAID/Nicaragua in March.	December 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015

Work Stream		Goal	Achievements Year I 10/1/14 – 9/30/15	Timeframe
5.	Higher Education Project Design Activity	To support the development of a solicitation document for a new regional higher education program, which focuses on strengthening the capacity of LAC higher education institutions to provide market- relevant quality training for marginalized populations with limited access to tertiary education.	SOG engaged a consultant to support the development of technical documents for a new program to build on the best practices of the Central American Scholarship Program (CASP), the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships (CASS), and the Scholarships for Education and Economic Development (SEED) program. The consultant also helped ensure the new program also takes into account USAID's interest moving toward building the capacity of local institutions.	December 15, 2014 – March 31, 2015
6.	Dominican Republic Final Performance Evaluation of the Effective Schools Program	To assess the effectiveness of the USAID/Dominican Republic Effective Schools Program in achieving its performance goals and its contributions to the Dominican primary education system, as well as to inform implementation of ongoing USAID/Dominican Republic work supporting improved primary education with a focus on reading.	SOG developed an evaluation plan, coordinated fieldwork logistics, and carried out in-country data collection. Data were gathered through document review, semi-structured key informant interviews, focus groups with parents and youth, and classroom observations. The evaluation placed particular emphasis on the Reading, Safe Schools (SS) and Inclusive Education (IE) program components, which are key activities in the upcoming USAID Lighting Excitement for Excellence in Reading (LEER) project. The evaluation concluded that ESP significantly contributed to the MINERD primary education system by developing an effective professional development program and building a cadre of specialized reading teachers, coaches, and models for replication. SOG delivered a final debriefing via teleconference to USAID and submitted its final report in July 2015.	March 15, 2015 – July 6, 2015

Work Stream		Goal	Achievements Year I 10/1/14 – 9/30/15	Timeframe
7-8.	Nicaragua Youth Assessment and FADCANIC Evaluation	To build on the findings of the 2012 Nicaragua Youth Assessment to determine how the violence and security situation has changed in the Caribbean coast and border regions. To analyze the at-risk youth model developed and implemented by the Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (FADCANIC).	SSG engaged consultants to conduct extensive primary and secondary research for both the assessment and evaluation. At the time of this report, the consultants are still working on completing the final draft of the Youth Assessment as well as the survey and draft evaluation of the FADCANIC EDUEXITO program. The Youth Assessment has added more nuanced data from additional sources, which will contribute to expanding the current knowledge about at-risk youth in the RACS and Autonomous Northern Caribbean Region (RACN). Additionally, a survey was not included in the original design of the FADCANIC evaluation design; however, its inclusion will improve the overall understanding of the program's impact.	June 10, 2015 – November 30, 2012
9.	Honduras Design Support	To provide support to the USAID/Honduras Education team to successfully complete program design and procurement processes under both Development Objectives of the CDCS, to improve citizen security and to reduce extreme poverty.	SSG engaged a consultant to work with members of the Education Development Office (EDO) team to assist with refining strategies and activities in support the development of new programs. The consultant's activities included reviewing existing strategy documents, participating in discussions with lead activity developers to clarify context, purpose, and approach of the activities; supporting the development of activity documents and revising existing activity documents. As a result of ongoing technical support needs of the Mission, the consultant's agreement was extended until December 31, 2015.	June 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015
10.	Honduras Sample Design	To define a sampling scheme for an assessment of academic performance in public schools (grades 1-9) that will enable USAID to accurately estimate academic achievement within each municipality in Honduras.	SSG engaged a consultant to develop a sample design, preliminary sample, and final sample report. SSG submitted these deliverables, which were satisfactorily approved by the mission on August 25, 2015. The sampling scheme for reading and math will now give the Ministry of Education better measurement capabilities to assess academic achievement within each municipality in Honduras.	July 16, 2015 – August 17, 2015

Work Stream		Goal	Achievements Year I 10/1/14 – 9/30/15	Timeframe
11.	Peru Implementation Support	To provide technical support to the USAID/Peru Education team; successfully plan a milestone event; and implement, coordinate, and report on USAID/Peru education programs.	SSG engaged a consultant to provide technical support to the USAID/Peru Education team to successfully plan a milestone event and support the implementation, coordination, and reporting on USAID/Peru's education programs. The consultant assisted with the development of a reading and gender workshop, helped prepare a milestone event for the <i>Amazonia Lee</i> project, updated fact sheets on education projects, and supported the development of technical programming documents.	July 22, 2015 – September 11, 2015
12.	Peru Reading and Gender Workshop	To design and implement two 3-day workshops in Spanish for USAID reading program implementers in Peru to strengthen technical knowledge and skills in early grade reading and gender in education.	SSG supported the implementation of two workshops for USAID reading program implementers in Peru to strengthen technical knowledge and skills in (a) early grade reading and (b) gender in education. Each workshop was characterized by participatory, experiential knowledge building and skills development activities. Participants not only strengthened their own capacities, but also developed mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these skills in the classroom. Additionally, the trainings provided space to collect information regarding the external technical assistance needed to accomplish educational goals, an essential component to developing future programs in the region. The Spanish version of the report from the workshops was submitted to USAID/Peru in October. At the time of this report, the report is being translated into English for submission to USAID. A total of 64 participants attended these two workshops.	September 13, 2015 – September 19, 2015
13.	Honduras Workforce Development Design	To design a refined statement of work (SOW) and other related documents for the design of a new workforce development activity that will provide employment opportunities for at risk youth in the DOI communities in Honduras.	SSG engaged a consultant to support this activity, which began on the last day of the reporting period. At the time of this report, the consultant has completed the desk review as well as in-country data collection and analysis, in consultation and coordination with the USAID/Honduras Mission.	September 30, 2015 – November 30, 2015

3. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

During the 2015 fiscal year, SSG utilized the in-house resources of Project Director Gary Russell, Senior Subject Matter Expert, Carrie Conway, Mid-Level Subject Matter Experts Olya Jerard and Joseph Elton, Junior Research Specialist Marissa Kimsey, and Junior Logistics and Program Specialists Ned Littlefield, Natalie Shemwell, and Elise Barry. SSG's staff provided technical and logistical support to LAC/RSD and the fielded consultants for the assigned tasks.

4. ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES NEXT YEAR

In the next year, SSG anticipates supporting LAC/RSD and Missions with the following activities:

- *Nicaragua Youth Assessment and FADCANIC Evaluation* – The Team Leader and Senior Data and Research Analyst will coordinate the survey being undertaken by BICU, as well as incorporate survey data into the FADCANIC evaluation. SSG will coordinate dissemination activities with the Mission and submit final draft reports of the FADCANIC evaluation and the Youth At-Risk Assessment.
- *Honduras Design Support* – The Design and Procurement Support Consultant will continue to coordinate directly with the Mission to ensure that all program and activity design documents adhere to relevant policies and guidelines, are of high quality, and clearly link to objectives and results as defined in the CDCS and Project Appraisal Documents.
- *Honduras Workforce Project Design* – SSG will continue to support the technical expert to develop a statement of work and other related documents for a new youth workforce development project that will provide employment opportunities for at-risk youth in Honduras.
- *Peru Study Tour* – SSG will work with the USAID LAC team as well as USAID/Peru to design and facilitate a study tour to Austin, Texas, including refining the study tour objectives, developing a detailed agenda, identifying technical experts, and coordinating travel and other logistics.

SSG will continue to communicate regularly with LAC/RSD and Missions in order to ensure responsiveness to changing resource needs. SSG will continue to submit weekly written project updates and will hold weekly phone calls with the USAID/RSD to ensure progress and quality of delivery against the assigned tasks. SSG will submit program and accruals reports at the end of each quarter, as well as an annual report at the end of years 2. SSG will also continue to recruit a pool of specialists for future education and WfD activities.

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